

Long Live the King Sermon Series  
#6 – Solomon Takes Over  
1 Kings 3:3-14  
Aug. 27, 2006

Our sermon series on David comes to a close today by looking at the legacy David leaves in the form of his son, Solomon. We could have ended this series last week, but the truth of David's life, and the truth of every life, is that it doesn't end when we die. Our influence extends far beyond our time here on earth. So there is more we can learn about David from watching his son, Solomon.

It was never a given that Solomon would follow his dad's footsteps to the throne. As you may remember from last week, David had several sons, all of whom wanted to wear the crown. One son, Ammon, was killed by his brother Absalom, who was then killed by David's soldiers after Absalom led a mutiny. When David was too old to rule, another son, Adonijah, set himself up as king without David knowing it. But Bathsheba talked David into anointing their son Solomon as David's successor, which he does, and Solomon becomes the king. Yes, Adonijah is then killed.

On his deathbed, David calls Solomon into his room to give him some final words of blessing. He says to Solomon, "So be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in his ways, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and requirements, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go." Pretty sound advice.

Solomon does the right thing and listens to his dad. I don't know that this was always the case, but now that Solomon is an adult, he probably looks at his dad differently. Mark Twain once said, "'When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around, but when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years.'

Solomon takes his dad's advice and is faithful in his worship to God. He goes to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, because the temple in Jerusalem, where all sacrifices would later be offered, was still under construction. While there, God comes to him in a dream. In the Old Testament, dreams were more than just random doodlings of the subconscious; they were divine intrusions, God speaking to humans during a time when the humans weren't in control of their thoughts. God spoke to Jacob and Joseph through dreams, and now does the same with Solomon.

In this dream, God makes an astonishing statement: "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." Now stop a second and think about what's just been dropped into Solomon's lap. God, the All-Powerful Omnipotent One, has said to Solomon, "So, what would you like? Name it. It's yours."

What would you ask for in this situation? The choices for Solomon are endless. As a king, he could ask for infinite riches or unchallenged power. He could ask for death to all his enemies or good health. He might want 100% approval in all the opinion polls or rock-

star celebrity status or to be at the top of the list of Sexiest Ruling Monarchs. If God granted you one wish, what would you ask for?

The story goes that three men were walking down a street and found a bottle lying on the side of the road. They picked it up and a genie popped out. The genie said, “For freeing me from the bottle, you will each get one wish.” The first man thought for a second, then said, “I wish I was 20 times smarter.” “Granted!” Poof! The genie made him 20 times smarter. The second man said, “I wish I was 30 times smarter.” “Granted!” Poof! The genie made him 30 times smarter. The last man said, “Oh yeah? Well I wish I was 100 times smarter.” “Granted!” Poof! The genie turned him into a woman. We have to be careful what we ask for, don’t we?

Solomon doesn’t wish for what we think a king would wish for. In fact, before he even makes his wish, he thinks through this choice. Most of us would probably make a knee-jerk decision when presented with such an opportunity, but Solomon realizes the gravity of what he is being offered. First, he praises God for God’s faithfulness to David. Then, he confesses his inadequacy for this calling: “I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.” And finally, he acknowledges the responsibility to which he has been entrusted: “You servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people.”

Solomon’s heart is in the right place. He’s making his decision with his focus on the charge God has given him. Most kings would have selfishly asked for long life, riches, and death to the opposition.

But for Solomon, he recognized that he was God's servant, and his goal was the welfare of God's people. And with that in mind, he asks for the one thing he will need most when serving God: he asks for wisdom.

The NIV translates Solomon's words as a request for a "discerning heart." Other translations say Solomon asked for a "a heart with the skill to listen" or a "God-listening heart." In the Hebrew scriptures, the heart was the seat of a person's thought and will. And in order to follow God faithfully, the heart had to be tuned to God's frequency. Psalm 90 says, "Teach us to number our days aright that we may gain the heart of wisdom." By focusing on God's call to them, a person gained access to God's wisdom.

It's important for us to understand a few things about Solomon's request. First, wisdom is different than knowledge or intelligence. The proverb says that, "Knowledge acquired is not necessarily wisdom dispensed." I know a lot of people who are very smart, but not very wise.

In the movie "Jurassic Park," scientist John Hammond has discovered a way to use DNA found in fossils to recreate living dinosaurs, and uses this technology to open a dinosaur theme park. Now, it takes a lot of intelligence to reach such an achievement, doesn't it? But when Hammond sees velociraptors chasing his grandchildren and T-Rexes eating his coworkers, he realizes he made not have made the wisest of choices.

More realistically, Albert Einstein agonized over some of his scientific discoveries, because they led to the technology that created

the atomic bomb. Einstein questioned the wisdom of his intellectual findings when he said, “It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.”

Solomon’s request was for God’s wisdom. The world tries to sell us wisdom, but it’s not God’s wisdom. Our world equates wisdom with success; why else do all the investment firms use grandfatherly-type folks as their spokesmen? A cartoon I saw recently showed a woman who’s scaled a mountain to talk to the guru at the top. As she approaches, he says, “My rates are \$200 for truths, \$100 for insights, and \$10 for wisecracks.” In this world, what often passes for wisdom is really only a wisecrack, and as Paul pointed out in 1 Corinthians, what this world considers foolish – things like believing in Jesus Christ and sacrificing for others – is actually God’s wisdom.

God’s wisdom is different. It comes from the heart, and it has as its main focus the establishing and preserving of God’s kingdom here on earth, a kingdom characterized by justice and mercy. Solomon was keenly aware of this, because he knew that one of the king’s main jobs was to serve as the chief judicial officer, rendering verdicts and determining right from wrong in his kingdom. And he knew that the only way he would be able to do this faithfully was if he did it with God’s wisdom guiding his decisions.

I believe that Godly wisdom isn’t imparted all at once. Instead, it is created in us a little bit at a time. Think of how an icicle is formed. Water freezes, one drop at a time, to form this structure which can grow to be a foot long. Wisdom is formed like an icicle: Each thought or

feeling is added, each decision we make plays a part, each life experience adds to it. Each time we make a decision based on God's will, another drop is added. And as God's wisdom grows inside of us, we experience more blessings that we could even imagine.

What amazes me about this passage is that Solomon asks for wisdom, yet God grants him so much more than that. The Bible speaks in many places about asking God for things. Jesus says in Matthew, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened."

Now, some people have misinterpreted this passage to mean that if we ask for that red Ferrari, God's going to hand over the keys. But this passage must be read in light of what Jesus says only a chapter earlier in Matthew: Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

It's easy to be frustrated when God doesn't give us what we want, but we might want to take a step back and reexamine what we are asking for. God says to Solomon, "Because you are seeking my kingdom first, I'm going to give you more than you could have even imagined, so that there will never had been anyone like you, nor will there ever be anyone like you."

We have each been uniquely created by God, put here on earth to do something only we can do. No one else can do what God has called us to do. But in order to find out what it is and do it, we need a God-listening heart that's tuned into God's frequency, that scours God's

word for guidance and opens itself to God's leading. If God came to you and gave you one wish, anything at all, what would you ask for? What would it be? Seek first God's kingdom and righteousness, the well-being of God's community, the sharing of God's blessings, and all these things will be given to you, as well.